

Bishop House  
George and Bartlett Streets  
New Brunswick  
Middlesex County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-712

HABS  
NJ  
12-NEERU  
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

## BISHOP HOUSE

Location: George and Bartlett Streets, New Brunswick,  
Middlesex County, New Jersey.

Present Owner: Rutgers, the State University.

Present Occupant: Owner.

Present Use: Classrooms and offices.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This large, Italianate mansion was built for  
James Bishop, prominent politician and  
businessman.

HABS

NJ

12-NEBRU

6-

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: James Bishop, original owner, who sold to Mahlon Martin in 1874. Rutgers, the State University, bought the house from the Martin estate in 1925.
2. Date of erection: 1852.
3. Builder: Isziah Rolfe.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: Except for the installation of a large staircase from the second to the third floor in 1957, it has not been extensively altered.
5. Sources of information: \* "The History of Bishop House," research paper in the History Department Files, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1951. \* Wm. E. Sherman.

## B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure

James Bishop (1816-1895) was descended from a family that came to Newbury, Mass., in 1637 and removed to Woodbridge, New Jersey in 1667. James inherited from his father large interests in shipping and in the rubber industry. He was, by the standards of his time, an extremely wealthy man. The land for his estate was acquired jointly with his brother, David, in 1848 and was divided in 1851, when construction of Bishop House began.

James Bishop served in the New Jersey Assembly and in the U. S. Congress (1855-7). He was active in the formation of what became the Republican Party in New Jersey. After suffering financial reverses in 1873, he sold Bishop House to Mahlon Martin in 1874. Bishop later served (1878-1893) as the first director of the New Jersey Bureau of Labor Statistics. He died near Morristown in 1895.

On April 1, 1925, Rutgers purchased the property from the Martin estate. From that time until 1934 it served to house both the Dean of Men (Frazer Metzger) and his family and the Department of History and Political Science. After 1934 it was occupied exclusively for classroom and office purposes.

Prepared by R. P. McCormick, Professor of History  
Rutgers University  
March 1960

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This is a massive, irregularly shaped, Italianate stucco mansion, two-and-a-half stories high with a full basement. It is quite well maintained.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Foundations: Cut brown-stone with basement windows projecting above grade.
2. Walls: Stucco on brick. The building is irregular, yet balanced with breaks, towers, wings and bays. Openings are on axis with gables or centered on towers. On one elevation, and around the top of one of the towers, small windows have been used to form a pierced frieze.
3. Porches: The front entrance porch is the lower portion of a three-storied tower, with arched openings at the front and on each side. A one-story wooden porch against the side of the tower returns around the corner of the building, encompassing a smaller octagonal tower. One of its bays is glass enclosed. This porch stops against a two-story right angled wing with a one-story semi-circular bay. On the opposite side of the house with two sides against the house is a one-story porch, rectangular in shape, with the roof supports of beautiful cast iron grille-work, in a New Orleans manner.

4. Roofs: The roofs are varied in shape and material; some have gable ends and wood shingles, some are shallow-pitched to metal covered decks, and one tower deck is covered with quarry tile. The hip roof over the square entrance tower is concave with a metal covered "eye-brow" window on each side.
5. Chimneys: The chimneys are topped with elongated round chimney pots, in various patterns with crenellated cornices.
6. Windows: Windows are circle-headed or round and vary in their groupings--one's, two's, three's or in rows. They all have heavy labels. Venetian windows in the living room, to the left of the front entrance, consist each of a pair of circle-head sash surmounted by a circular sash and curved quadrants, all in a wooden frame beneath a curved label, and opening onto a cast iron balcony. The semi-circular bay has three circle-headed double-hung windows, nine light over nine light. All other windows are narrow with double hung sash, two light over two light, except for the attic and the round windows which are casements.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: A center hall, flanked by rooms of various sizes, bypasses the main stairs, continuing to the rear of the building to a minor exterior door and a minor stairway leading to the second floor and attic. The house has 42 rooms.
2. Stairs: The main stairs start in the center of the front hall and lead to a landing where they return in two flights against the walls to the second floor. The walnut balustrade has two faceted newel posts, rather heavy faceted and turned balusters and a broad, gently curved, moulded handrail. The handrail, curving back on itself at the landing, continues uninterrupted around a curved second floor stair well returning down the opposite side. About 1950 another flight of stairs was built from the second floor, beyond the well, rising over the railing to the attic. This flight was made to match the existing stairs. There is an oval shaped skylight in the second floor ceiling over the stair well.
3. Walls: All walls are plastered, including the attic which has been divided into two levels, with many small rooms off central halls.

4. Ceilings: The ceilings of the principal rooms have moulded plaster cartouches and run-plaster cornices.
5. Trim: All door and window trim is large with heavy mouldings. The Library, to the right of the front entrance, is lined with bookcases enclosed with circle-headed glass doors reaching nearly to the ceiling. They are capped with a wood frieze and cornice which breaks around each book case and forms the main cornice of the room. The corner of each bookcase has clustered, triple, slender columns with Gothic mouldings. Window paneling has semi-circular arches supported by very slender colonnettes. The window recesses are fitted with paneled interior shutters, in two parts, recessed into the window jambs.
6. Floors: The first floor front hall is paved with ceramic tiles laid in a diagonal pattern. All other floors on first and second floors are hard wood. The floor of the Library is laid in an intricate star-shaped pattern using various widths of colored woods. One room in the rear section has an alternating striped hardwood floor of contrasting colors with a sailing ship worked in as a central motif.
7. Lighting: All modern electric.
8. Heating: Steam heat from its own boiler in the basement.

Prepared by George Brokaw Howell  
Architect, Rutgers University (ret.)  
New Brunswick, New Jersey  
December 1960